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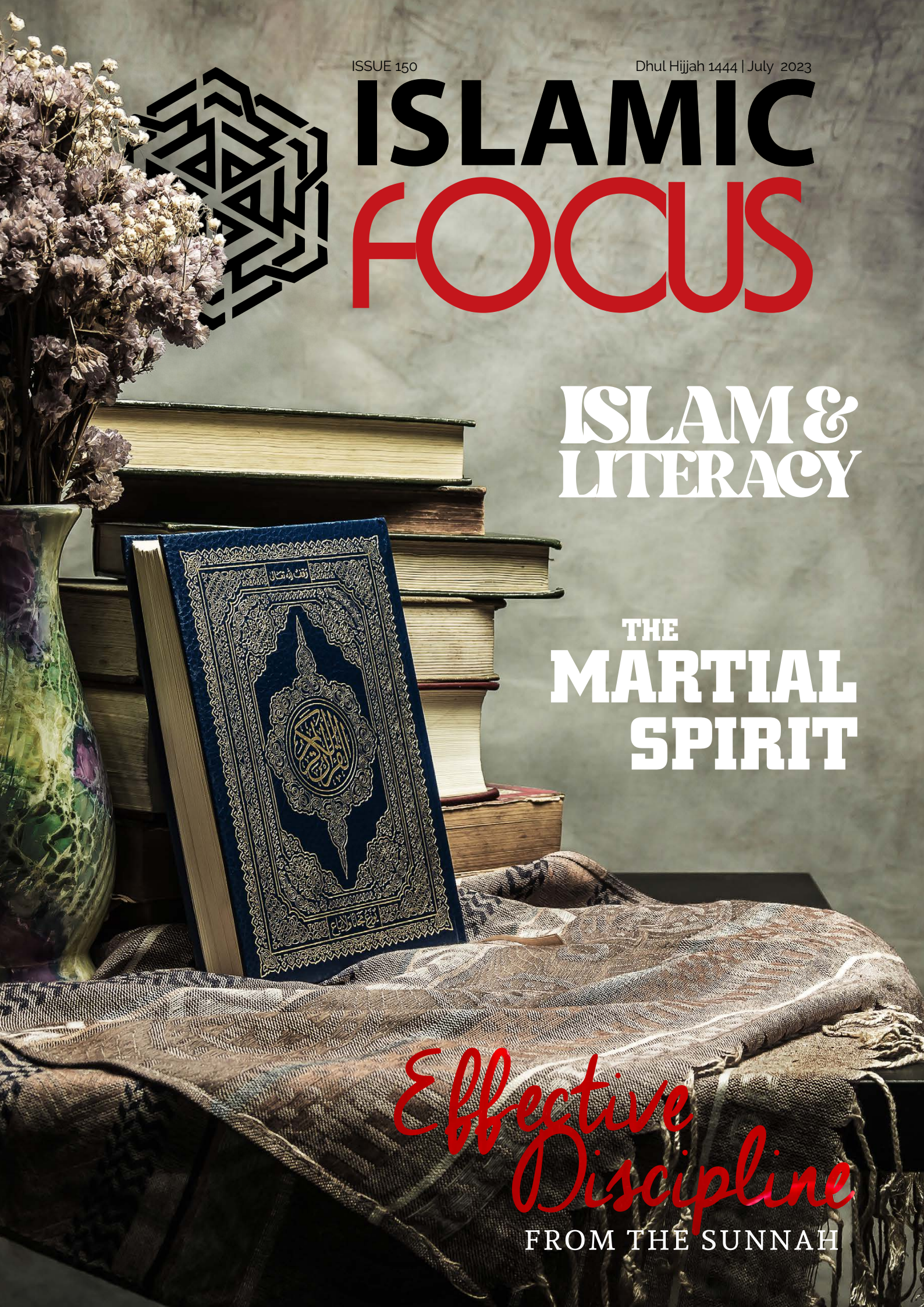
Dhul Hijjah 1444 | July 2023



# ISLAMIC FOCUS

ISLAM &  
LITERACY

THE  
MARTIAL  
SPIRIT



*Effective  
Discipline*

FROM THE SUNNAH

# Ahlan Wasahlan...

## FROM THE EDITOR

As the landmarks in our life roll by, we need to be more than ever aware of the most monumental of those landmarks which is death. The transition from this world to the next is the most crucial aspect of our existence. In the article on our expiry date, we look at how to approach death and prepare for it. We unpack how to utilise the capital which is our life as well as deal with any setbacks on this journey towards death.

Literacy and a love and passion for books, writing, reading, and academia was embedded within Muslim culture from the very beginning. In our article on the Muslim literary tradition, we look at how this culture was established from the earliest days of Islam. Along the way some of the significant Muslim literary contributions to fiction and the sciences are touched on. The

love that Muslim scholars had for books is shown in anecdotes from their lives. The benefits of reading are listed together with tips on encouraging kids to read. We also give some of our recommended nonfiction reads.

The article on effective discipline takes us into the beautiful teachings of the Sunnah in this regard.

The martial spirit and traditional masculinity are fast losing their foothold in the modern world. Islam teaches us a healthy expression of manhood with loyalty, a sense of justice, and bravery in confronting evil. Check out our article on this topic.

Email your thoughts to us: [info@islamicfocus.co.za](mailto:info@islamicfocus.co.za)

*Muhammad Badsha*  
(Moulana)

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# THE EXPIRY DATE

“OUR GREATEST LANDMARK AND ONE THAT OVERSHADOWS ALL OTHERS IS OUR EXPIRY DATE OF LIFE. THE DAY WE DIE

In life we have milestones that mark our transition from one phase to another. When we were young it is our school exams, matric and so forth. Often, how we prepare for that landmark determines how well we do in the next phase and what opportunities we have. Our greatest landmark and one that overshadows all others is our expiry date of life, the day we die. How we live prior to it and how we prepare for it will determine the sort of existence we will experience beyond it.

How do we go about preparing for it. Like how we motivate the students towards their matric exams for example we need to be motivating ourselves for the momentous occasion of death. We need to be speaking about it often, create awareness around it, research it, get to know its ins and outs, and do deeds and live a life that will secure a beautiful existence beyond death.

## A LONG LIFE

*“Do not wish for death because its horror is intense. Good fortune is that one has a long life and Allah ﷻ gives him the ability to repent.” (Ahmed)*

To wish for death due to life becoming difficult is not allowed. If the test becomes very difficult the most one can do is to pray as outlined in the Hadith of Bukhari: “Oh Allah, keep me alive as long as living is best for me, and grant me death if death is better for me.”

The only person who can truly rest after death is the one who is forgiven by Allah ﷻ and accepted by Him. (Ahmed) And who can have this absolute assurance?

*“Happiness, utter happiness is to have a long life in the obedience of Allah ﷻ.” (Hadith) “A Muslim’s life only increases him in goodness.” (Muslim)*

The hadith sums it up, *“Do not wish for death because if you are doing good, extra life will only add more goodness to your good actions. And if you happen to be doing the wrong things, then an extension of your life gives you a second chance to repent from your sins.”* (Bukhari)

That is why one of the pious old men when asked, “Do you love death?” replied, “No, for my youth and its evil impulses has departed. And old age and its goodness has arrived. When I stand, I say Bismillah and when I sit, I say Alhamdulillah. I love that this excellent state is prolonged.” Another was asked, “What do you have to live for?” He replied, “An opportunity to cry over my sins.”

*“There is nothing more virtuous in the Sight of Allah ﷻ than a Believer who grows old in Islam due to his recitation of Subhanallah, Allahu Akbar and La ilaha illallah.”* (Ahmed)

Yes, one may yearn for death once the love for Allah ﷻ increases. In this instance the person longs to meet Allah ﷻ. Abu Darda ؓ said, “I love death out of a longing to meet my Lord.” A poet says, “A sinner yearns for You, Oh the One who is near, the way a thirsty person yearns for a

drink of sweet, cool water.” The condition is that the person’s deeds are in line with the rules of Allah ﷻ. The Hadith tells us, “No one should wish for death except a person who has confidence in his deeds.”

## PREPARATION

To get a good death one needs to live his life doing such things that he would not mind being found doing when death comes. Abu Hazim ؓ said, *“Every action which you do not want to be found doing at death, leave it out from your life. It will then not harm you when you die.”*

At the end of the day, one may commit all the sins he wishes but where can he run? “Where is the place of refuge and safety when Allah ﷻ is in pursuit and the sinner is definitely going to be caught?” (Poem) Once we realise the seriousness of our expiry date, we need to urgently start doing good deeds and leave out the bad.

This life can be compared to fasting in the month of Ramadaan. It is a fast from committing the sins that are displeasing to Allah ﷻ. The celebration of breaking the fast, the day of Eid, is the day we meet Allah ﷻ.

Once a person makes the necessary preparation and works hard in pleasing Allah ﷻ then when his body is carried for burial, he will say, “Hurry up with me!” out of anticipation of the rewards that he sees in store. Otherwise, it will be the start of eternal regret with his soul calling out to those carrying his body, “Where are you taking me?”

The pious would express fear over what fate awaited them after death. Ibrahim Nakhai ؓ, while on his deathbed, said, “I am awaiting the angel of death, not knowing if he will give me good news of Paradise, or the horrific news of Hell.”

We don’t wish for death, but we certainly work towards the certainty of its coming. Umar ؓ said, “Don’t wish for death because you will in any case die. But do ask for wellbeing.” The drink of death cannot be endured except by those who are fearful of Allah ﷻ, are obedient to Him and are expecting the coming of death. Abu al Atahiya expresses it eloquently, “Oh, death has a drink and what a drink it is! You will definitely have to experience that drink. No one knows what actually goes on in the grave except Allah ﷻ and the one who is in that tomb.”

## THE CAPITAL OF LIFE

It is death, our inevitable landmark that we are journeying towards. What remains of our lives is our capital. The remainder of our lives needs to be lived with constant improvement of our connection with Allah ﷻ. Whoever's two days are equal with no improvement is defrauded and in loss. Whoever's today is worse than his yesterday is cursed. And whoever has not striven for increase in his good work is in decrease.

The pious would feel embarrassed if their day ended the same as yesterday. They felt ashamed at missing out on the opportunity to improve.

The poet laments, "Is it not a sign of ruin that nights pass by without me gaining any benefit and yet I continue to count them as part of my life?" No one dies except with a regret. If he was doing good deeds, he regrets that he could not have done more. If he was a sinner, he regrets not getting another chance to repent. (Tirmidhi)

*"If an ignorant person wishes to purchase the remainder of your life tell him that what remains of a Muslim's life is priceless." (Poem)*

Take the best of pillows and the most comfortable of beds to lie on. After death you will rest your head on the hard rock of the grave.

# DEALING WITH SETBACKS

On this journey of life we will encounter setbacks, slip ups, mistakes and decisions that we regret making. How do we deal with them to ensure that we still have a good chance at succeeding beyond death? The Prophets of Allah ﷻ were protected from committing any sin but at times they would do something which would be nothing for us but, due to their high status it would be something that they would count as serious. The Noble Quran recounts these occasions and details their response in such instances.

In Surah Saad, Allah ﷻ recounts such incidents in the lives of Prophets Dawood and Sulaiman ؑ. *"Be patient with what they say. And remember Our servant Dawood, the man of strength. Indeed, he constantly turned to Allah."* (Noble Quran, 38:17) Prophet Dawood ؑ had this quality that he would constantly turn to Allah ﷻ when he felt he had made some mistake.

This is the secret to overcoming life's slip ups. We need to turn to Allah ﷻ without delay every time we slip and repair our connection with Allah ﷻ. Prophet Dawood ؑ had given some advice when two disputants came to him with a case after only hearing one person's claim. He immediately realised the error and, 1. Asked Allah ﷻ for forgiveness, 2.

Humbled himself before Allah ﷻ, and 3. Turned to Allah ﷻ. In return he got three gifts: 1. He was forgiven, 2. He gained a status of nearness to Allah ﷻ, and 3. He got an excellent end in Paradise. (Noble Quran, 24-25)

Mistakes don't mean that we cannot reach the high ranks of Divine acceptance.

Allah ﷻ describes Prophet Dawood ؑ' s son Prophet Sulaiman ؑ as an excellent slave and great in turning to Allah ﷻ. (Noble Quran, 38:30)

What we have left of our lives can be used to earn the best of real estates in Paradise. It is an asset which we alone can use to our benefit. The poet exclaims, "I lament over the 50 years of my life that have passed. If I am told that I will live to 100 it would crush me with the realisation that I have already lived half of my life."

We do not know how much of life we have left. We simply cannot afford to go along merrily with our lives without taking the end of it seriously. We need to work with determination and focus towards earning a better Paradise. Remember death, speak about it often and make it a priority to pass its test successfully.

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# ISLAM & LITERACY

**W**e have been created with enquiring minds. Mankind has constantly looked for ways to improve the quality of life and has made steady progress in inventions and knowledge. This is largely because people wrote down their discoveries and passed this on to others. Different cultures would adapt and improve on this. This quality of scholarship and a love and passion for books, writing, reading, literacy and academia was also embedded within Muslim culture from the very beginning. In this article we explore literacy and the position of books and reading within the Muslim community.

## LITERARY TRADITION

The Prophet ﷺ would use scribes to note down the revelation of the Noble Quran. Among them were the like of Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthmaan, Ali, Khalid ibn Saeed and others. They were also given the task of writing his letters and responding to his correspondence as well. Some were instructed to learn the Syriac language so that they could respond in that language when the need arose. Others would write down the records of Zakaat.

After the Battle of Badr, the Quraishi fighters who were captured were set free on paying a ransom. Those who were literate were set free after teaching 10 Muslim children each how to read and write. The institution of reading, writing and literacy was thus a pivotal part of early Muslim society.

This tradition has continued under all the Muslim empires that followed. The Umayyads would encourage the art of reading and books. By the time of the Abbasids literacy was flourishing. The Baitul Hikmah (House of Wisdom) was established in Baghdad. Also known as the Grand Library of Baghdad, it was set up in the late 700's. It was destroyed during the Mongol invasion of 1258. This institution spearheaded the translation movement

where texts in Greek, Latin, Syriac, Persian and other languages were translated into Arabic. This fed scientific research for centuries in the West.

Scholarship flourished and the works of other cultures were expanded on in the fields of medicine, alchemy, physics, maths and astrology to name but a few. Building on this, Muslims would go on to even invent new categories.

## PAPER MAKING

In 751 the Battle of Talas in central Asia (around modern-day Kazakhstan/Kyrgyzstan) took place. It was not a particularly noteworthy battle between the Abbasid forces and their allies from the Tibetan Empire ranged against the Chinese Tang Dynasty. What was significant was that the art of paper making was learnt by the Muslims from Chinese captured in this battle. The first paper mill was built in Baghdad in 794. Paper replaced papyrus in the Islamic world and cheap writing material was now available. Muslims went on to invent a way to make a thicker sheet of paper and this transformed paper making from an art to a major industry.

Muslims produced an astounding amount of literary works through the ages. They delved into every field of knowledge available.



## FICTION

1. The Kalilah wa Dimnah is a collection of fables translated by Ibn al Muqaffa from Indian sources. It went on to influence many tales in a similar strain
2. Kitab al Hayawaan was a book that contained many Arabic proverbs.
3. The Arabian Nights collection of stories including those of Aladdin, Sinbad and Ali Baba still influence modern story telling in the West.
4. The genre of Maqamahs is exemplified by the one of Al Hariri. This was the closest concept to the Western style of short stories. It tells of the adventures of the fictional Abu Zaid al Saruji with language tools such as assonance, alliteration, and palindromes. It was imitated in Hebrew later.

## THE SCIENCES

Ground-breaking literary works in numerous fields were produced by Muslims:

1. In Philosophy Ibn Sina's Canon of Medicine became a standard medical text at universities in the West and remained in use until 1650, nearly 600 years later.
2. The Arabic translations of Greek philosophical works of Plato, Aristotle and Socrates preserved these works for even the modern West.
3. Al Idrisi wrote on geography and travel. Muslim travellers kept notes on their travels and the travelogues of Ibn Battuta or Ibn Jubair still making for fascinating reading.
4. In history, Ibn Khaldun's Muqaddimah attempted to

analyse the trends in history and is still held in high esteem.

5. Works on spirituality such as the Mathnawi of Jalaluddin Rumi ﷺ heavily influenced even Western concepts in this regard.

This is but a small taste of the astounding amount of literary works produced by Muslim scholars.

## LOVE FOR BOOKS

Muslim scholars loved books and all the associated arts.

1. Isam ibn Yusuf al Balakhi once bought a pen for a Dinar (gold coin) in order to write down immediately what he heard.
2. Muhammad ibn Salaam al Bikandi, the Sheikh of Imam Bukhari ﷺ, was a young student in the class of his teacher who was narrating. His pen broke so he announced that he would buy a pen for a Dinar to continue writing without interruption.
3. Yahya Ibn Maeen ﷺ started writing Hadith at the age of 10. He stated that he had written one million Hadith by hand, including writing some up to 50 times to learn them. He left behind 114 containers of books and four larger crates.
4. Al Jahiz used to read any book he found from cover to cover no matter the topic. He would rent the shops of paper sellers to spend the nights there in order to read the books they stored.
5. Many were the scholars such as Al Fath ibn Khaqaan who would be constantly reading.

6. Ibn Jarir ﷺ wrote 40 pages a day for 40 years totalling an output of 358,000 pages in his lifetime.
7. Ismail ibn Ishaq al Qadi was never seen except that he either had a book in his hand or was looking through the books searching for one to read or was dusting the books.
8. Scholars like Khatib al Baghdadi would be found reading and walking. Some like Ibn al Khayyat would be knocked down by horses many times while walking the streets in this manner. Tha'lab died of injuries sustained in this way.
9. Muhammad ibn Hassan al Shaibani ﷺ would read the whole night. When he would get bored with one book, he would turn to another.

## BENEFITS OF READING

1. It exercises the brain. This is especially found when you need to remember plots and characters. It also improves memory function. As a result, it slows down age-related cognitive decline such as Alzheimer's, dementia, and memory loss. A Rush University study found that brain activity is important for good brain health in old age.
  2. It reduces stress. A University of Sussex study found that there was a 68% reduction in stress levels by reading for just 6 minutes. You need to concentrate when reading and the distraction this provides eases the tensions in the muscles and the heart. The University of Essex study found that 30 minutes of reading lowered blood pressure and the heart rate.
  3. It improves vocabulary. Children who regularly read books at an early age develop larger vocabularies in the long run. Teens who read gain 26% more words than those who never read. (Centre for Longitudinal Studies) 11,000 14-year-olds were observed in this study. Teens from book loving homes knew 42% more words than those who grew up with less books.
  4. It can improve the quality of your sleep and help with insomnia. 42% of people who made reading a part of the bedtime routine felt an improvement in sleep quality. We are relying on increased screen time to get through the day. Picking up a book before bed tells the brain it is time to relax.
  5. Reading can boost your spirits. 76% of people surveyed in a UK study said that reading helped in making them feel good. The Greek historian Diodorus Siculus says that there was a phrase above the entrance to the royal chamber where books were stored by Rameses II which read, "The House of Healing for the Soul." (circa 60-30 BC)
  6. Bibliotherapy is a field that refers to book or reading therapy together with writing therapy. As far back as 1272 reading the Noble Quran was prescribed reading at Al Mansoor Hospital in Cairo as part of the medical treatment. By 1900 libraries were an important part of European psychiatric institutes. During World War I librarians were stationed at British military hospitals where they dispensed books to patients in what came to be known as bibliotherapy.
  7. Nonfiction teaches us facts, general knowledge and expands our thought process and analytical reasoning. It gives us more to speak about in social gatherings than the usual politics and gossip!
- Muslims flourished when they studied, read widely, and wrote down their knowledge and discoveries. In a world where the book is fast falling out of favour in exchange for audio visual entertainment, and short social media posts here and there, we need to urgently encourage the next generation to fall in love with reading.

## HOW TO ENCOURAGE KIDS TO READ

1. Read to kids daily.
2. Let them see you reading. Things like recipes, instructions, maps and books.
3. Get them a library card. I fondly remember the Saturday mornings spent browsing the local library in search of new delights or old favourites. Library cards are our magic carpets to amazing destinations. We are fortunate that cities in South Africa have so many established libraries. Sadly, many a kid has not seen the inside of one. It also seems that libraries themselves are keen to hasten the death of the book with ever growing collections of DVDs and limited operating hours.
4. Keep a collection of books of interest where your kids can get to it. The house bookshelf is one of the most critical tools in fostering reading. Let the kids make their discoveries themselves.

## SOME CAUTION

As with everything else, there is material that one needs to stay away from, and which should not be read. These include material that push a particular detrimental agenda such as homosexuality or encourage the erosion of morality. Blasphemous books that actively attack the cherished beliefs of Islam such as the Satanic Verses should also be shunned.

You will, in your reading journey, find bigoted, misleading, and factually incorrect material. Bad books are like bad company, and they can influence you adversely. Read judiciously but don't be afraid to read widely. When you read anything that gives you cause to doubt, clear up these by consulting with learned Ulama and scholars.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Do a little regularly. It will eventually add up to an amazing amount, for what are rivers but a gathering of many small drops of water**

What we should be reading is the Noble Quran and the sciences related to it, Hadith, history as well as the many good fiction and nonfiction out there. Find a balance of serious and light-hearted reading. People ask for recommended reading, and we list some titles to get you going. But you go out and discover the wonderful world of the written world out there for yourself.

1. A Talib's Tale: The Life and Times of a Pashtoon Englishman by John Butt. An account of a man who found Islam in Pakistan and Afghanistan.
2. One Thousand Roads to Mecca: Ten Centuries of Travelers Writing about the Muslim Pilgrimage. A collection of travel journals edited by Michael Wolf. Covering over 20 accounts made over 10 centuries, this work shows many sides of the Hajj.
3. The Sabres of Paradise by Lesley Blanch. During the Great Caucasus War of 1834-1859, the tribes of Daghestan and Chechnya united under the

leadership of Muslim chieftain Imam Shamiel, the Lion of Daghestan, and held at bay the invading Russian army for nearly 25 years. Lesley Blanch vividly recounts the epic story of their heroic struggle for freedom and the life of a man still legendary in the Caucasus.

4. Monk of Mokha by Dave Eggers. The story of a young Yemeni American man who dreams of resurrecting the ancient art of Yemeni coffee but finds himself trapped in Sana'a by civil war. The book weaves together the history of coffee, the Yemeni civil war, and the journey of a young man.

Where to start reading? Start small. Imam Bahauddin al Halabi said, "Do a little regularly. It will eventually add up to an amazing amount, for what are rivers but a gathering of many small drops of water." Let us go back to being a nation that reads and loves books. Tap into the world of knowledge that's awaiting out there.

# HADITH

## VERIFICATION SERIES 12

In this series we bring you a selection of topics from hadithanswers.com



### FOSTER SIBLINGS OF NABI ﷺ

**Question:** : : Can you please tell me the names of the foster brothers and sisters of Nabi ﷺ?

**Answer:** The foster siblings of Nabi ﷺ are as follows:

1. Sayyiduna Hamzah ibn 'Abdil Muttalib ﷺ

Sahih Bukhari (4251, 5100) and Sahih Muslim (1446)

2. Sayyiduna Abu Salamah 'Abdullah ibn 'Abdil Asad ﷺ

Sahih Bukhari (5107) and Sahih Muslim (1449).

Hafiz Ibn Kathir ﷺ has quoted Muhammad ibn Ishaq ﷺ who has enlisted other foster siblings of Nabi ﷺ:

3. 'Abdullah ibn Harith

4. Unaysah bintul Harith

5. Hudhafah bintul Harith, also known as: Shima

These were the children of Halimah Sa'diyyah.

(Al Bidayah wan Nihayah, vol. 3 pg. 53/54)

Hafiz Ibn Hajar (رحمته) has mentioned another son of Halimah Sa'diyyah who is also a foster brother of Nabi ﷺ:

6. Hafs ibn Halimah Sa'diyyah.

(Al Isabah, vol. 2 pg. 580, number: 1773)

'Allamah ibn Qayyim ﷺ has added another Sahabi:

7. Abu Sufyan ibn Harith ibn 'Abdil Muttalib ﷺ. (Zadul Ma'ad, vol. 1 pg. 81)

Some authors of Sirah have also added:

8. Sayyiduna 'Uthman ibn Maz'un ﷺ.

(Insanul 'Uyun Fi Siratil Aminil Ma-mun; As Sirah Al Halabiyyah, vol. 2 pg. 104, Muntahas Sul, vol. 1 pg. 409 and Imam Bajuri's commentary on Shamail Tirmidhi; Al Mawahibul Laduniyyah 'alash Shamailil Muhammadiyyah, pg. 515, Hadith: 326)

And Allah ﷻ Knows best.

### THE STEPCHILDREN OF NABI ﷺ

**Question:** How many stepchildren did our Beloved Nabi ﷺ have and what were their names if possible?

**Answer:** The authors of Sirah have mentioned that the following wives of Rasulullah ﷺ had children from previous marriages:

1. Sayyidah Khadijah ﷺ. She bore four children from two marriages prior to Nabi ﷺ. From one husband, She bore a son; 'Abdullah. She had two sons; Hind and Harith and a daughter; Zaynab from the other husband. Some authors of Sirah suggest that she had three children from two previous marriages, two sons and a daughter.

2. Sayyidah Ummu Salamah ﷺ. She had four children from her previous marriage. 'Umar, Salamah, Durrah and Zaynab

3. Sayyidah Sawdah ﷺ. She had one son from a previous marriage, 'Abdur Rahman.

4. Sayyidah Ummu Habibah ﷺ. She had one daughter from a previous marriage; Habibah. Thus her agnomen, Ummu Habibah. (Refer: Jawami'us Sirah an Nabawiyyah of Ibn Hazm, pgs. 24-27, Al Mawahibul Laduniyyah, vol. 2 pg. 76, Sharhuz Zurqani, vol. 4 pg. 377 and Al Isabah, vol. 13 pg. 391)

The above is what I have come across explicitly. They ﷺ could have had other children besides what is mentioned above.

And Allah ﷻ Knows best.

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# Effective Discipline

## FROM THE SUNNAH

It was narrated that Rafi bin Amr Al Ghifari رضي الله عنه said: "When I was a boy, I used to throw stones at our date palms." I was brought to the Prophet ﷺ and he asked me, "My dear boy, why are you throwing stones at the date palms?" I replied, "So I can eat." He said, "Don't throw stones at the date palms. Rather eat from what falls to the ground from them." Then he patted me on the head and said, "O Allah give him enough to eat."  
(Ibn Majah)

1. Set limits. Have clear and consistent rules your children can follow. Be sure to explain these rules in age-appropriate terms they can understand. The Prophet ﷺ instructed him not to throw stones at the trees.
2. Hear them out and encourage communication. Listening is important. Let your child finish the story before helping solve the problem. Instead of punishing your child for misbehavior, encourage open and honest communication to understand why they acted the way they did. This can help you address underlying issues or emotions and find more effective solutions for dealing with behavior challenges. The Prophet ﷺ asked Rafi رضي الله عنه why he was throwing stones. Rafi رضي الله عنه replied that he wanted to eat the fruit.
3. Redirect bad behavior. Sometimes children misbehave because they are bored or don't know any better. Find something

else for your child to do. The Prophet ﷺ told Rafi رضي الله عنه to rather eat from the fruits that had already fallen

4. Deal affectionately. To be effective, discipline needs to be given by an adult with an affectionate bond to the child. The child should know the adult loves him. The Prophet ﷺ addressed Rafi رضي الله عنه kindly, patted him on the head and prayed for him.

To be effective, discipline needs to be:

1. Given by an adult with an affective bond to the child;
2. Perceived as 'fair' by the child;
3. Developmentally and temperamentally appropriate; and
4. Self-enhancing, i.e., ultimately leading to self-discipline.

All this was found in the manner which the Prophet ﷺ dealt with children.

Discipline is the structure that helps the child fit into the real world happily and effectively. It is the foundation for the development of the child's own self-discipline. Effective and positive discipline is about teaching and guiding children, not just forcing them to obey. As with all other interventions aimed at pointing out unacceptable behaviour, the child should always know that the parent loves and supports him or her. Rafi رضي الله عنه himself narrates this incident showing the positive impact it had on him.

Parents, teachers, and other caregivers can lose their patience with the mischief of children very quickly, especially if these children are extremely intelligent, curious, energetic, bold, self-confident, and spirited. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ handled many situations involving the antics and natural tendencies of infants and minor children with exemplary patience and good-naturedness.

## TOLERANCE FOR INFANT MESSES

Babies are cuddly and adorable until they do something smelly and leaky in their diaper. The Prophet ﷺ would often take infants in his lap, even though there were no leak-proof diapers. Aisha ؓ narrated, "A boy was brought to the Prophet ﷺ to do Tahnik (put something sweet in his mouth) for him, but the boy urinated on him. The Prophet ﷺ had water poured on the place of urine." (Bukhari)

The Prophet ﷺ refrained from expressing disgust or immediately denying a new-born baby his lap even when the baby urinated on his clothes. This indicates his high level of tolerance for babies' natural phases. We should not get irritated at the natural messes that babies tend to make even if the mess gets on our clothes. We should also help clean up the mess without considering it beneath our social dignity to do so.

## TOLERATING NATURAL TODDLER ANTICS

Babies grow older to become active and energetic toddlers, who love climbing on to the laps and backs of adults. The Prophet ﷺ not only allowed children in this age-range inside his masjid during obligatory congregational prayers, but also patiently tolerated their antics during prayers, even if these antics caused some disturbance.

It is narrated by Abdullah ibn Shaddad from his father, "The

Prophet ﷺ came out to lead us in either Maghrib or Esha one night, and he was carrying Hassan or Hussain. The Prophet ﷺ came forward and put the child down, then he said takbir and started to pray. During the prayer, he prostrated in Sajdah and made it long. My father said: "I raised my head and I saw the child on the back of the Prophet ﷺ whilst he was prostrating, so I returned to my prostration." When the Prophet ﷺ finished praying, the people said, "O Prophet ﷺ, during your prayer you prostrated for so long that we thought something had happened or that you were receiving revelation." He replied, "Nothing at all happened, but my son was riding on my back, and I did not want to disturb him until he had enough." (Nasai)

This is another great example of how tolerant the Prophet ﷺ was regarding children's playfulness.

## USING HANDS GENTLY TO REPRIMAND

Children love physical displays of affection, and like being touched in a positive manner. Instead of subjecting them to long lectures to correct their mistakes,

physically removing them from harm is at times more effective.

Abu Hurairah ؓ narrated, "Dates used to be brought to the Prophet ﷺ immediately after being plucked. Different persons would bring their dates till a big heap collected. Once Hassan and Hussain ؓ were playing with these dates. One of them took a date and put it in his mouth. The Prophet ﷺ looked at him and took it out from his mouth and said: "Don't you know that Muhammad ﷺ offspring do not eat what is given in charity?" (Bukhari)

The Prophet ﷺ taking the date out of his grandson's mouth himself whilst giving him a short explanation of the reason, deployed the most effective strategy of quickly resolving the situation. Which small child would willingly spit a tasty, sweet date out from their mouth themselves?

A parent might keep shouting at a small child to not touch an object or to stay away from a dangerous area, all the while being ignored by the child. They then snap and give the child a harsh scolding for not listening to them.

”

**The Prophet ﷺ  
used a combination  
of physical touch and  
gentle reprimanding  
words**

”

**... I raised my head  
and I saw the child  
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was prostrating**

The lesson from this hadith about the correct thing to do in such a situation is for an adult to get up quickly and physically remove the small child from harm, warning them about the reason in brief words.

The following Hadith also corroborates this strategy:

Anas ﷺ said, "The Prophet ﷺ was one of the best of men in character. One day, he sent me to do something, and I said that I will not go. In my heart however I felt that I would go to do what the Prophet ﷺ had commanded. So I went out and came upon some boys who were playing in the street. Suddenly the Prophet ﷺ who had come up behind, caught me by the back of the neck, and when I looked at him, he was laughing. He said: "Go where I ordered you, little Anas." I replied, "Yes, I am going, O Messenger of Allah ﷺ!" (Abu Dawood)

The Prophet ﷺ used a combination of physical touch and gentle reprimanding words to make little Anas ﷺ realize his forgetfulness. The Prophet ﷺ knew that it is natural for a little boy to get distracted from an errand by other children's street games.

This hadith also indicates that when a child passes the toddler

stage, it is good to train them to do light, easy tasks for adults, but to remember that it is normal for him or her to resist immediate obedience and to get distracted by other children's play.

## EXPLAINING CONCISELY FOR CORRECTION

When a child becomes older, he or she reaches the age of mentally understanding what is right and what is wrong. When he encountered such a child doing something the wrong way, the Prophet ﷺ would gently correct them and explain to them how to do it right, without scolding harshly or making them feel humiliated in front of others.

Umar ibn Abu Salamah ﷺ narrated, "I was a boy under the care of the Prophet ﷺ and as my hand used to wander around in the dish, he said to me once, 'Mention Allah's Name

(i.e., say Bismillah), eat with your right hand, and eat from what is in front of you.'" (Bukhari)

Children tend to have short attention spans, high energy levels, and an extremely curious nature due to which they want to explore everything in the world, most of which is still very new to them. Adults might misinterpret their natural actions and reactions to situations in a negative manner, unless they proactively practice patience without belittling, rebuking, or reprimanding them harshly and unjustly.

"He is not of us who does not have mercy on our young children, nor honour our elderly." (Tirmidhi) The children who grew up around the Prophet ﷺ are witness to the loving and patient way that he treated them, even when they made mistakes. He used age-appropriate discipline tactics that helped kids fit into the real world effectively. The Sunnah methods of discipline are an embodiment of the best child discipline techniques that the rest of the world is slowly discovering.



# THE MARTIAL SPIRIT

In this world there is a strong link between cause and effect. This is a system which Allah ﷻ has put into place for us. Our bodies are a trust from Allah ﷻ and not to be used as we wish: "Your body has a right over you." (Bukhari) We need to maintain our body to allow it to work at its optimum. This means that, among the more important elements, we eat well, sleep well and exercise.

Over the centuries nations flourished when their values were upheld, the values of integrity, honesty, loyalty, chastity, and a martial spirit. Once the morality of a nation goes, that nation or community is on the path to destruction.

"Alas, among the older generations there were few people of virtue, those who would take a stand against corruption and disorder in the land. Except the few whom We saved for their piety." (Noble Quran 11:116) These people being described in the Noble Quran are the people who hold on to the moral values of a nation which allowed it to rise and flourish. They hold on to them at the time when others are in decline.

Nations need a martial spirit to defend against violence. There need to be males who are true to the nature that Allah ﷻ created them with. When people stand up to defend their land against aggression they are looked up to as heroes. The Afghans were praised in their heroic defence of their land against the Soviet invasion of the 1980's. Defending oneself against aggression and injustice is a praiseworthy quality.

"Whoever is killed in defence of his wealth is a martyr. Whoever is killed in defence of his family, himself, or his religion is a martyr." (Bukhari)

Everyone loves to live in peace and comfort, but the harsh reality is that the world is full of violence, aggression, and evil people. The spate of kidnappings and the abuse of the most vulnerable in society are a harsh reminder of this. The more one does not take a stand, the more others with evil intentions take advantage.

The west says that there is a concept of toxic masculinity where men abuse women and children. The reality is that this is not too much masculinity but rather a deficiency of true masculinity. True masculinity means protecting the weak, looking after women and children, and defending one's home and community. When a Muslim has this Futuwwa or masculinity it comes with a code of honour. A pious, strong man is humble, warm hearted, and engaging.

Traditional masculinity is fast losing its foothold in the modern world. There is an attempt to emasculate males and make them effeminate. Islam teaches us a healthy expression of manhood with loyalty, a sense of justice, and bravery in confronting those who carry out evil. It comes with beautiful character, courtesy to others, honour, gallantry towards women, and the ability to fight back when needed.

//  
**WHOEVER IS  
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## HEALTHY EATING

To build a healthy physical body requires eating healthy and well. "The son of Adam cannot fill a vessel worse than his stomach, as it is enough for him to take a few bites to straighten his back. If he cannot do it, then he may fill it with a third of his food, a third of his drink, and a third of his breath." (Tirmidhi) Do not put your internal organs under strain by overeating – your digestive system, your bladder, and lungs especially.

From the Sunnah we learn about intermittent fasting. The Prophet ﷺ loved to fast on Mondays and Thursdays (Tirmidhi) and recommended fasting the three middle days of the month (Tirmidhi). Modern studies show that, among other things, the health benefits of intermittent fasting include:

1. Better immune and inflammatory response. There is less risk of inflammation when fasting.
2. Decreased persistent or chronic illness.
3. Higher quality brain function. It promotes better learning and memory capacity.

We are reminded that there is nothing wrong with wealth for the one who fears Allah ﷻ but good health is better for him than wealth. And being in good spirits is a blessing. (Ibn Majah)

Sleeping well is also essential for good mental and physical health. The Hadith encourages going to sleep early after Esha. This will ensure we awaken fresh and early the next day and be fortified mentally and physically.

## EXERCISE AND TRAINING

The third component of good health and a well-maintained body is exercise. By extension this includes weapons and self-defence training. "The strong believer is more beloved to Allah than the weak believer, but there is goodness

in both of them." (Muslim) When you have physical strength, and a spirit to fight back coupled with the necessary training, it becomes a deterrent to those who might wish to take advantage of you. Criminals will think twice.

"Prepare against them what you can of military power and cavalry to strike terror into Allah's enemies and your enemies as well as other enemies unknown to you but known to Allah." (Noble Quran 8:60) Striking terror means to deter the enemy from taking advantage of you. They think twice about hurting you. Peace is a blessing and we pray for it daily, "O Allah, You are peace and from You is peace. Blessed are You, the Majestic and Noble." (Muslim) But one needs to be prepared for war to be able to live in peace. By being strong and prepared you deter wrong doers. They don't want to fight you because they fear you. It is essential for criminal elements to be stopped and not be allowed to destroy our communities with impunity. Moulana Rumi ﷺ said, "Good people at times need to take up a sword to remove it from the hands of mad men."

The society we live in has kidnappings and robberies as a daily occurrence. Our kids and ourselves need to be able to fight back and use weapons for self-defence proficiently. Knives, sprays, and firearms are all essential for self-defence. From the Hadith and the lifestyle of the Sahaba ﷺ we learn that stick fighting, using swords and other weapons, swimming, horse riding, archery, racing and wrestling are skills that are encouraged and bring great reward if done with the correct intention.

Archery teaches discipline, time management and coordination. The area between the targets is a garden of Paradise and it is one of the best past times.

Sport and physical exercises are

essentially for health and self defence and should not just be a spectator sport or the commercialised versions that we see today, rife with match fixing, betting and other unIslamic factors. We need to reclaim these sports for their original purpose.

Wrestling is established from the Sunnah and youth used to be tested for battle readiness through it. The Prophet ﷺ took on the greatest wrestler of his time and took him down thrice. Imam Suyuti ﷺ has written a book on the Sunnah of wrestling. Again, it is not the modern, commercialised entertainment form that we see today. The Hadith tells us to avoid the face when hitting (Muslim). There is a principle outlined in Ibn Majah, "There is no causing harm to others, nor allowing oneself to be harmed." Using these guidelines, we can understand that boxing, MMA, etc. that is prevalent today will not be allowed.

Umar ﷺ encouraged, "Teach your children swimming and teach your fighters archery." The Hadith speaks about training of horses and the blessing attached to them, "Goodness is tied to the forelocks of horses until the Day of Resurrection." (Nasai) Even having fun to relieve boredom and doing horse riding as a hobby will be praiseworthy. Hajjaj ibn Yusuf said, "Teach my children swimming. They can find someone to write for them any time, but no one will be able to swim for them at the moment of danger."

The aims of sport and physical exercise for a Muslim should be to gain strength to worship, to defend Islam or one's life, property and family, and to be healthy.



**IF YOU MEET YOUR ENEMY IN BATTLE,  
BE PATIENT AND KNOW THAT  
PARADISE IS UNDER THE SHADE OF  
SWORDS**

# **TRAINING THE SOUL**

Together with physical fitness comes the training of the soul. We need to control our ego and not go around looking for fights or boast of our prowess. The Hadith tells us, "O people, do not desire to meet the enemy, but rather ask Allah for safety. If you meet your enemy in battle, be patient and know that Paradise is under the shade of swords." (Bukhari) Don't have a desire to show off by picking a fight, but when you happen to be confronted then be brave and fight well.

The martial or warrior spirit needs to be used for good. It should not drive us to be haughty, proud, or distant from people. Rather, our piety should make us more friendly and easy-going.

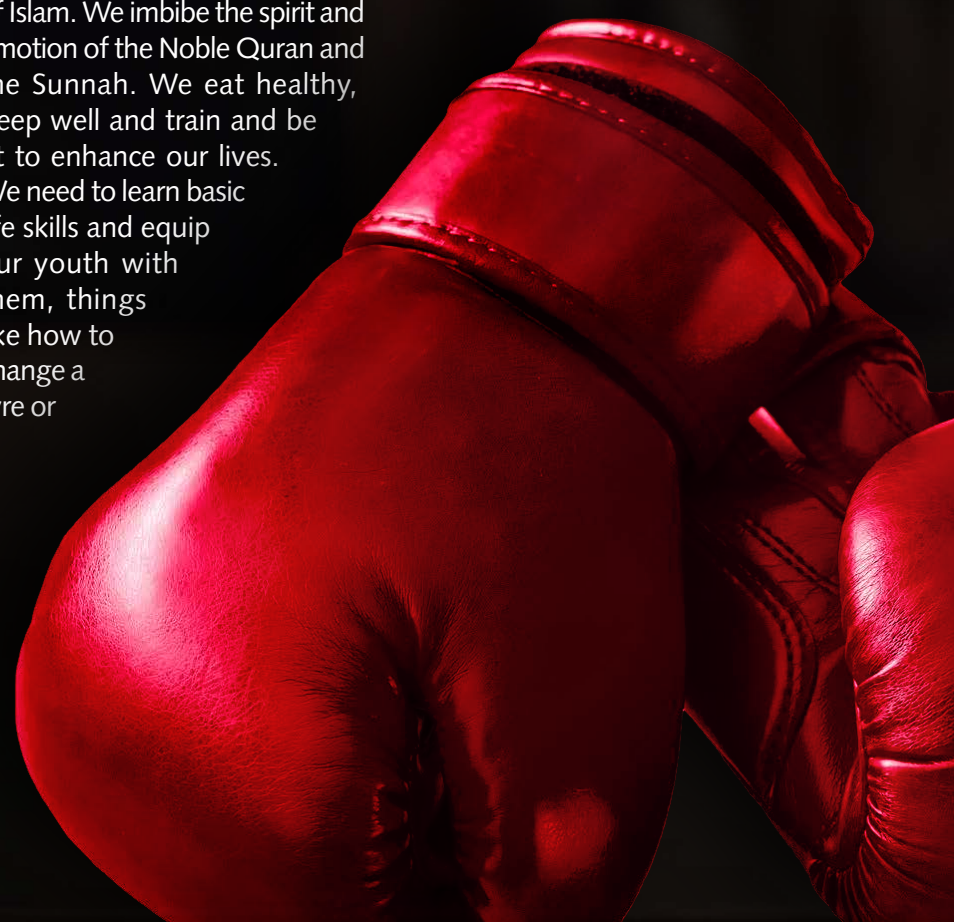
When life becomes comfortable, we become complacent. We don't see any urgency or need to train and be healthy. Someone asked a Hainan master, "What brings down nations?" He replied, "Too many successful wars. It brings luxury in its wake, the rulers become arrogant and wasteful,

and the nation loses its advantage."

There needs to be some activity within our lives. Avenues need to be created for the youth to be physically fit. Dedicated youth centres need to be established within Muslim communities to cater for their fitness and to grow mentally. We might be past the age of training but we can leave a legacy by investing in avenues for the youth of the community.

The final component is that we use health together with the spirit of Islam. We imbibe the spirit and emotion of the Noble Quran and the Sunnah. We eat healthy, sleep well and train and be fit to enhance our lives. We need to learn basic life skills and equip our youth with them, things like how to change a tyre or

unblock a drain. Ultimately, we should strive to be the men described in the Noble Quran 33:23, "Among the believers are men who have proven true to what they pledged to Allah. Some of them have fulfilled their pledge with their lives, others are waiting their turn. They have never changed their commitment in the least." Men who were true to the promise to Allah ﷻ, giving their lives to defend the good, and those who are waiting in line.

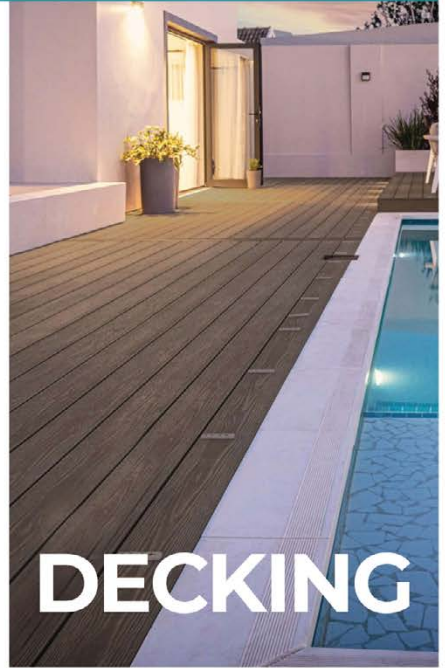




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## ALLAH SAYS IN THE QURAN

“The parable of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is that of a grain of corn. It grows seven ears and each ear has hundred grains. Allah increases manifold to whom He pleases.” (Quran 2:261)

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